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AUTHOR Millard, Richard M.
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ABSTRACT

This speech emphasizes the thesis that the major function of education should be to prepare students for a vocation. Some implications for community colleges are: (1) the need for comprehensiveness, including communication and cooperation with high schools and 4-year colleges; (2) the need for statewide planning, clear identification of institutional goals, and complementary planning within the colleges to eliminate the qualitative differences in terminal and transfer programs; (3) the need for a diverse faculty with complementary and mutually respected vocations; (4) the importance of cooperation between community colleges and the community in planning programs that meet local manpower needs and providing work-study opportunities in the community; and (5) the involvement of the total college in guidance. Also examined are the limits of comprehensiveness and the elimination of time-defined educational concepts. (RN)

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Speech by Dr. Richard M. Millard, Director of Higher Education Services, Education Commission of the States, to the Community College Seminar, Boston Hotel, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, June 5, 1972. (Keynote address)

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THE ROLE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND FUNCTION OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

Massachusetts from the very beginning of its community college system has in many ways been singularly blessed, so much so that I am not sure that the Massachusetts' citizens or even all the people involved in the Massachusetts community colleges realize how relatively fortunate they are. From the passage of the authorizing legislation and the establishment of the Regional Board of Community Colleges in 1958, the community colleges in Massachusetts have been thought of and planned for not as a series of independent units whose primary function was transfer of arts and science students and whose goal was to graduate into four-year institutions themselves, but as a system of community related institutions, comprehensive in character, complementary in function, and on the whole located where they would most advantageously meet the needs of the state and of local communities.

The Massachusetts community colleges have been amazingly fortunate in their leadership including the president of the Regional Board of Community Colleges, the board members themselves, and the presidents of the various colleges. Under their leadership the community colleges have been willing to plan and experiment and to adapt experiments and planning to the unique needs of individual communities. On the whole they have been able to bring together faculties dedicated to the comprehensive community college ideal who particularly in the earlier days in spite of less than optimal physical conditions and sometimes less than optimal financial support

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were able to create vital institutions responsive to the needs of the communities and the students. Thus whereas the Carnegie Commission in The Open-Door Colleges reported in 1970 that students in occupational programs in community colleges had increased in the 1960s from one-quarter to one-third of the students, if I remember correctly, when I left Massachusetts in 1969 something close to 50% of the students in the Massachusetts community colleges were in occupational programs of some type. The community colleges in Massachusetts have also had an enviable record of being willing to cooperate with other types of postsecondary institutions, from the University of Massachusetts through the state colleges to local private junior colleges and area vocational schools, a willingness that has not always been fully reciprocated.

Here perhaps a word of personal testimony might not be wholly out of order. One of the most enjoyable parts of the fascinating, complex, and sometimes flustrating task I had as first Chancellor of the Board of Higher Education in Massachusetts was serving on the Board of Regional Community Colleges and working with the community colleges in the total system. The Board was, and, I am sure still is very much aware and concerned with the vital issues not just in community colleges but in postsecondary education as a whole. I had the feeling as I visited the community colleges then in the system that here was where much of the really growing edge not simply in terms of numbers but in terms of receptivity to new ideas, of willingness to experiment, of models for change in postsecondary education in Massachusetts as a whole resided. This is not to say that there were not tensions, persistent problems, and times when we did not all see eye to eye, but it is to recognize clearly that I owe the many

people in the Massachusetts Community Colleges, including the Board and Bill Dwyer, a tremendous debt in my own continuing education. This does not mean that any of them are responsible for what I am about to say. It is good to be back even for a day.

But this brings us to the central theme: "The Role, Responsibility, and Function of Occupational Education in the Community Colleges." In a sense to talk to you on this subject is like bringing coals to Newcastle, and yet, given the present situation across the country in relation to postsecondary education as a whole, I can think of few subjects more important for us to explore together than this, and, perhaps I can bring a somewhat different perspective to the discussion.

You are as aware as I am that all is not "glorious summer" in the land of postsecondary education and in the country of what has been considered traditional higher education in particular. We are in a period which Earl Cheit has described as "the New Depression in higher education." The relative affluence and expansionism of the 1960s is over. While Massachusetts has not been hit as hard as other states yet, partially because its recognition of and support of public postsecondary education came later than in most other states, in 1970-71 some 26 states either stood still or lost ground in the actual amount of funds appropriated per student for higher education and one state lost ground to the extent of 17 percent. And the situation has deteriorated rather than improved in 1971-72 as well as in the prospects for this next year. While the situation in public institutions has not reached the survival crisis stage it has for many private institutions, some not very far from here, in the public sector the competition for funds from welfare, health services, highways, and elementary-secondary education has constantly increased along with

progressively rising costs of postsecondary education itself and all of this without correspondingly increasing tax bases. The Rodriguez case, if upheld by the Supreme Court, is likely to heighten the competition for funds even more sharply between elementary-secondary and postsecondary education in a great number of states, including Massachusetts.

While the student unrest of the 1960s cannot be listed as the cause of the financial problems of the 1970s, it probably did more to undermine public and legislative confidence in postsecondary and higher education than many members of the educational community even yet realize. And insofar as the student unrest was directed at the higher educational institutions rather than national and international affairs the students had their points. There is little question that much of the expansion of the 1960s took place in a context of more of the same, and the same did not necessarily meet the needs of the additional students. We were so busy expanding that we frequently forgot to explore the implications or needs created by the growing percentages of young people going on to college, to graduate school, etc. and what this in fact meant for society as well as the young people. To be sure there were notable exceptions but they tended to be exceptions rather than the rule. One result was that institutions did tend to become more and more alike. Except in Massachusetts, good community colleges frequently under parochial community pressures aspired to become poor four-year colleges and good four-year colleges aspired to become poor universities with graduate schools and the model for undergraduate education tended to remain the university college of Jencks and Reisman.

Among the results has been the fact that in spite of its accomplishments in meeting the expansion needs of the 1960s, post-secondary education is both in trouble and under attack today from many quarters. In the light of the monetary crisis, legislators are demanding greater fiscal accountability. In some states legislatures are prescribing teaching loads or attempting to. In others tenure is being reviewed. Some people are saying too many people are going to college. At the same time it is national policy to make higher educational opportunity available to all individuals interested and capable of benefiting from it. We have rightly become acutely aware of the needs of minorities and women. The call for reform and innovation is coming from multiple sources--among the more moderate the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and among the more insistent the Newman Task Force with its quasi-official status in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

To meet the challenge "innovation" whether fact or fiction has become the watchword, if not the cliche, of the day. Institutions and systems are either talking about or implementing universities-without-walls, external degrees, out-reach programs, multiple points of entry and exit, and what have you. Many of the real reforms are long overdue and highly desirable. It may well be that postsecondary education ten years from now will only faintly resemble its structure today.

But what has all this to do with occupational education in the community colleges? To my way of thinking it has a very great deal to do with it and the community colleges as a result may well be the key to a revitalized and truly effective postsecondary educational community of systems in the future.

Those of us in higher education have tended to forget that the origins of higher education in the medieval universities related to vocation conceived of not simply as skill preparation but as preparation for a career, what one does with his life, his "calling." My basic thesis today is that in the concept of vocation, occupation, or career as originally and broadly interpreted may well lie the key to restructuring, reforming, and revitalizing of postsecondary education as a whole. The concept of the comprehensive community college with its multiple opportunities for career development into technical, skill, or scholarly fields if taken seriously comes as close to the embodiment of such a concept and ideal as any existing postsecondary educational structure and in practice provides the leeway and the imagination to experiment further in carrying it out. At least to date in the community colleges of the nation arteriosclerosis is not a common characteristic. Now if one were to put back vocation or preparation for vocation or calling as the central aim of education then a number of things begin to fall into perspective and some of the broad dichotomies we have drawn in the past begin to disappear or at least make little sense.

In the first place the recognition that the aim of education is vocation suggests that one is equally engaged in vocational or occupational education whether he chooses the life of the dental technician, the classical scholar, the auto mechanic, the medical doctor, the electronics technician, the engineer, or the philosopher. It does not invalidate other conceptions of the aims of education such as personal enlightment, social development, exploration of the realms of knowledge, even adjustment or search for identity, but gives them point and direction. It does away with a pseudo-elitism

that separates the white-collar worker from the blue-collar worker, the scholar or research worker from the business man, and the professional from the technician and recognizes that what all of us are or should be engaged in is finding the most effective way to utilize and develop our abilities in a changing society for our mutual advantage.

Once the concept of vocation or calling becomes central much of the current discussion about relevance and identity and the kind of self-pity and sick introspection that charactize so many people, not just the young, in our society today reveals its own emptiness. Relevance must be to something. There is no such thing as relevance in general. Identity is not something that can be found by looking for it. I would suggest that identity can only be discovered by engaging in something one can do well, by being involved in the kind of work, if you will, the kind of occupation which is commensurate with developed abilities and interests and the satisfaction that comes with realizing you are making a contribution to society. Plato recognized this a long time ago. It is time we rediscover it.

Specifically, in relation to the educational system the recognition that vocation or career is central does call for the kind of planned diversified system which will in fact provide the range of opportunities commensurate with human interests and needs and societal demands. It means that the full range of education from kindergarten through graduate school and continuing education is not a baby-sitting operation or a dodge to keep people off the streets or the labor market but is concerned with the vital business of societal renewal and development.

But what implications does this have for community colleges as such? Again, the concept of the comprehensive community college probably comes as close to the embodiment of the ideal as any form of education existing today. It is designed to offer the range of opportunities from remedial through technical, preprofessional, general, transfer and continuing education to meet a variety of citizen's needs of all ages. From the outset at least in concept the comprehensive community college was not supposed to encourage invidious comparisons but to encourage recognition that the occupation of being a scholar or being a mechanic are equally important in their way and each has its own criteria of excellence and achievement. The aim of the comprehensive community college was to meet both the diverse needs of students and the manpower needs of society. In the comprehensive community colleges occupational and vocational programs in the more restricted sense of skill preparation are or are supposed to be placed within a context in which their full value could and would be recognized and so structured that students pursuing them would not be "locked in" to dead-end careers or become technically obsolete upon graduation. Comprehensive community colleges have the opportunity of focussing the various areas of knowledge towards their relevance in enriched careers of many types, of opening doors rather than closing them.

But to fulfill this comprehensive career function a number of things are essential. First, the community colleges must themselves recognize that they are an integral part of the total educational process, that no community college or system of community colleges can be all things to all people. From this standpoint articulation with secondary schools not just in relation to college

preparatory students but students with general curricula and in occupational or vocational areas is crucial. There should be common planning for student career advancement with secondary schools and, of major importance, communication and mutual education with and of high school guidance counselors. Equally important is articulation with other colleges, universities, and technical schools so that doors are not closed and so that there is a mutual understanding of what is being accomplished at various levels and how such accomplishments can most fruitfully be built upon.

This, however, has an observe side. Far too frequently in the past four-year institutions have attempted to determine what the program in community colleges should be particularly for transfer students--and those in occupational programs too often have been considered beyond the pale. The high schools have also felt the "molding effect" of four-year and two-year institutions. What does seem called for is not to "tell" but to "learn," to plan together for educational progression. The time is past when any educational institution, if for no other reason than the sake of its students, can consider itself in isolation. Too frequently the kinds of discussions in relation to articulation with senior institutions have concentrated primarily on the amount and kind of credits that will be accepted. As important as accepting credit is, given present structures, I wonder if this really gets at the heart of the matter? Far more fundamental particularly as it relates to education for vocation in the broad sense is what the aims of the institutions themselves are, what levels of achievement are expected and attained by their students, and how institutionally these do or do not complement each other. At best, credits are outward and somewhat

arbitary signs that may or may not relate to what really is intended or what in fact takes place. What does seem called for is effective planning that includes the whole system of education for differentiation of function and progression to different effective levels of achievement recognizing that in different vocations these levels and achievements take place at different times and in different ways.

The need for planning, for clear identification of goals, and for complementation of efforts is essential within individual community colleges themselves. In his swing around the country Ed Gleazer discovered that in far too many community colleges there is internal polarity and devisiveness stemming from their very comprehensive mission. Instead of mutual complementation of efforts arising from the recognition that all students are concerned with vocation, students and faculty were and frequently are divided into the transfer program and the occupational or terminal programs and never the twain shall meet, or, if they do the occupational groups are considered second-class citizens. Part of this is the result of inadequate guidance. Part can be attributed to the miseducation of faculty members in some graduate schools. Part can be attributed to communal misunderstanding. And part has to be attributed again to misdirected aspects of the streaming process long before students reach the postsecondary educational level. But what ever the cause or causes where such internal division and class structure occurs the results are unfortunate for all students and the comprehensiveness of the college losses its very reason for being. If all students are concerned with careers than the difference lies in the careers and the points of entry, not in qualitative difference in programs. Each program should be the best that can be devised for the career in question. And the faculty members teaching in areas that are relevant to a number or all careers need to realize it is students and not just subjects they are dealing with.

It might be highly desirable if we did away with "terminal and transfer" designation altogether and simply recognize multiple students preparing for multiple careers. Among other things this might have the advantage of calling attention to the fact that a first-rate experienced technician capable of sharing his knowledge and experience is every bit as crucial to the faculty of a community college and may contribute far more in his speciality than the PhD in english with proper credentials and little experience or understanding of the variety of students for whom his task is to make english alive.

To achieve the kind of diversity in unity commensurate with a multi-vocations approach and recognition of the many forms of excellence, if you will, may require some serious rethinking of faculty credentialling and preparation itself. In certain career areas the direct involvement of the business and industrial communities is of critical importance. The double problem of finding the most effective experiential setting as integral to the educational experience of the student, and, the persons on the community college staff itself with the most relevant qualifications whether gained in formal education or not cannot be avoided. The community college cannot afford the straitjacket of traditional credentialling with its assumption that a PhD, a DA, or an MA is a necessary qualification for faculty membership. Nor can it afford to treat faculty with different credentials highly relevant to the task they are performing as second-class faculty members. I would suggest that ideally the faculty of a community college is or should be a community of persons with different and complementary "vocations" or callings who respect each others vocations quite apart from traditional criteria, devoted to opening of career possibilities to a wide variety of citizens of all ages.

To attain such an ideal faculty will require not only searching for the most capable people in each area both in terms of experience and the communication of it, but will also require some extraordinarily serious discussion with graduate schools and graduate departments in relation to preparation of teachers in more academically oriented areas. Far too frequently such discussions when they occur involve the graduate departments telling the community colleges how they should proceed and how their faculties should be educated. If the universities are to educate effective community college faculty this must not happen in the future. The discussions really should be mutual discussions and the preparation of students through internships and otherwise for the english candidate, the sociology candidate, even the mathematics candidate should not simply be teaching a formal class but should include field work in the community and even in the business, industry, and service agencies for which the community college students are preparing.

Closely related to faculty preparation and community of faclulty in this concept of education for vocation or calling is the relation of the community college to its community. To keep the community college close to the community the Carnegie Commission recommends some local funding for all community colleges. I frankly do not think this is the answer and the Massachusetts experience confirms my thinking. Local funding too frequently leads to the wrong kind of local parochialism. It most frequently is the locally funded community college that for reasons of misplaced local pride aspires to four-year college status. But the need for community involvement and involvement in the community is clear. First from the program planning standpoint, the manpower needs of the local community as well as the wider state community need to be carefully

considered. It makes not sense to include a program in forestry in the middle of Boston and a major program in urban renewal in Pittsfield.

But second and equally important, the community, as you are well aware, provides the laboratory, the business and industrial organizations, the environmental and human conditions in which and through which the students gain experience. Here I would make a strong plea that even those students headed for more academic work in arts and sciences areas should, perhaps particularly should, while in community colleges also be included in community involvement programs if for no other reason, to discover a bit more of what the real world is like. Here common planning with the community, its business, industrial, governmental, welfare, community, and environmental leaders and organizations is crucial.

But lets carry this one step further and relate it to the matter of facilities. The community itself provides perhaps the most valuable facility any community college has. It is important to have decent facilities for the college itself. I am not advocating that Cape Cod Community College move back into the heart of Hyannis. But I would suggest that there is a danger in a too self-enclosed and magnificant campus of losing sight of the real community facilities of the community college unless one specifically plans otherwise. It is the offices, the shops, the industries, the fishing fleets, the forested areas, the farms, the cooperatives, including the vocational technical schools in the area that can contribute the most important facilities available.

It is because of the resources of the community and the fact that long before universities-without-walls, out-reach programs, etc. were popular forms of "innovation," the community colleges were in many

instances already involved in such endeavors where it counts in the local communities that the community colleges utilizing the broader concept of vocation have such potential for being the keys to revitalizing postsecondary education as a whole. What I am suggesting is that you not lose the initiative. The campus of the community college should in fact be the entire community no matter how handsome and complete its home base is.

An additional factor that is of key importance in implementing the concept of education as preparation for vocation in the broad sense and occupational education in the more restricted sense as integral to the former is guidance. I can remember all too well the reluctance of the Massachusetts legislature in providing guidance positions for the community colleges. And yet given the wide variety of types of students from all kinds of backgrounds and of all ages that knock at the community college doors the need for effective guidance, for advice, for realistic assessment of potential in the light of interest, is probably as critical as any other single issue. But I would like to make the plea that the kind of guidance personnel involved need to be peculiarly broad and capable people who themselves through in-service as well as prior training need to become acquainted first hand with the community and with the vocations in the broad sense available. In fact I would like to make a modification in a popular refrain and suggest that guidance in the community college setting is too important to be left to the guidance counselors alone. In a sense every member of the faculty, the administration, and even the wider community has a stake as well as the students in effective guidance and perhaps in the light of this the resources available for

effective career and personnel guidance are as wide as the communities, if, they can be effectively tapped and utilized.

We have already suggested that the need for effective planning for education as preparation for vocation in the broad sense must include the full range of education and that within this context it does have particular implications for the individual community college, but also, that it has major implications for a state system of community colleges. Here the question of institutional differentiation does become critical. While every or most community college should be comprehensive, there is a limit to feasible comprehensiveness. I think that there is little question but that there will have to be more rather than less movement in the direction of specialization in clusters of programs among the various community colleges. We have already suggested something of this nature in relation to the resources and manpower needs of the communities. But it has more far-reaching aspects. As you are well aware, within the health and health-related fields alone there is a burgeoning of new subfields and of technician programs proposed to go with each. It is neither economically nor socially nor educationally feasible for every community college to become involved in each. Here planning on the state level and in cooperation with other types of institutions including senior colleges, universities, medical schools, hospitals, and so on is critically important or we are likely to be drowned in sub-specialities. The kind of work that Paul Buckley was and I hope still is engaged in in cooperation not only with the Regional Board of Community Colleges but the Board of Higher Education and the North Shore health-related institutions should probably be carried out for the various regions of the state.

This does raise the question as to whether community colleges if they move into more specialized clusters of preparation can remain wholly commuter institutions. That they should remain primarily commuter institutions is, it seems to me, clear. But as the Carnegie Commission has pointed out, if one recognizes that sheer cost not only in money but in faculty expertness prohibits excessive duplication at least some provision for housing students interested in specialized areas should be considered. Again, planning on the state community college level to achieve maximum effectiveness with minimum duplication in the light of reasonable differentiation is critical.

But we can carry this one step further. Career preparation if our basic thesis is correct neither begins nor ends with community colleges. Effective planning and complementation of efforts must extend if it is to have full impact to the full range of postsecondary education public, private, and even proprietary. As I am sure you know, if the House of Representatives passed it this week the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 will reinforce the need for exactly such planning with the full involvement of the postsecondary education community. If we take seriously the concept of education as preparation for vocation in the broad sense, no less will be necessary. The rest of the higher education community has much to learn from the experiences of the community colleges, but, even the community colleges cannot accomplish the goal alone. It must involve the common endeavor of the total educational community.

There is one final issue it seems to me is directly relevant to this discussion and one where again the community colleges may well be able to take the lead. You will notice that I have refused to use the

term two-year colleges in referring to community colleges at any point in the discussion. If we are serious about preparing or renewing people for a variety of life works and styles, for vocation, then we need to move away as quickly as possible from quanitative time-defined concepts of the educational process. The relevant question is not how long it takes but what is accomplished. For far too long we have been caught in the bind of credit boxes, hours, and years. To assume that two years and 60 credits defines a technician or an associate degree, that four years or 120 hours defines an educated person is to my way of thinking nonense. It is far more important to define the competancies you expect a person to have if he is to be an effective radiological technician, electronics technician, social work helper, accountant, or if he is obtaining general background to continue in the health fields, sociology, mathematics, or what have you. It may take one person a few weeks, another two or three years. Some programs will need to be longer or shorter depending upon the area. It really, for that matter, is not particularly important where the person obtained his knowledge and skill, but, depending upon how much knowledge and skill he already has, his involvement in the community college or other postsecondary educational institution will be longer or shorter. This, I think, is what is really involved in the concept of the external degree. What I am suggesting is that one of the most fundamental jobs we need to do in all areas of education is to define more clearly what achievement levels we expect and how these relate to vocation in the broad sense and then build levels of educational accomplish not on time but on achievement. Here again the community colleges have a unique opportunity particularly in the specific occupational areas to lead the way.

We have a tremendous task ahead of us, a task that involves the revitalization of education--not that it is now dead but in part at least it is feeling poorly and its destination at this point is not quite clear. It may well be that at least part of the answer lies in a return to the simple recognition that the major function of education in contrast to research and other forms of community service is to prepare students for a vocation, a life work and a life style in the broad sense and that in this occupational education rather than being a stepchild is an integral and vital part of the whole. The community colleges have a critically important role to play in such a renewal and reform. But it will take the cooperative efforts of the entire educational community to achieve the goal.

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